



Tuesday July 7th, 2015

TO: Afton Trail Run Volunteers Team

Dear Friends,

I almost always listen to music or talk-radio in the car (or 26 foot straight-truck) but almost never on the way home from a race - I am always shot, worn down, worn out, suspended in a dehydrated post-race-endorphin-crash trance - I need quiet. My mind will wander from one abstract thought to another, I think a little bit about the race and the performances of the runners but mostly, I think about "our team" our group of dedicated v-v-v-volunteers, ah, race staff - no, TEAM. This year with blast-furnace hot air blowing in the window of the noisy diesel, I had a daydream about a "race production world championships" where teams of race organizations compete against one and other to see who can host the best race. Like any other team sport I figured you need good management, solid coaching, consistent veteran players (to teach the new players), star players, new recruits fresh out of the draft, support staff and on and on - all of which we have (we are lucky to be deep at every position). I imagined all of you and the roles you collectively play, where each of you fits into the ATR picture. As the country roads disappeared from my rear-view-mirror and I approached heavier traffic on the streets closer to home I rolled up the window, turned on the AC and focused my attention, the fantasy started to fade. As I navigated the commercial rig through the final turns home the fantasy concluded with our team decisively winning the championship - the margin, wide.

A few conversations with participants stuck out for me this year - I spoke in depth with two different trail / ultrarunners from other parts of the country with lots of trail / ultra races, both told me they had never experienced anything like the Afton Trail Run before - they said they had "races back home" but they had never experienced an "event" like Afton; from the pre-race communication, parking, check-in, swag, the trail, course markings, aid stations, finish line, post race picnic, medals, awards and most importantly the volunteers and the vibe. Another gentleman approached me - his appearance, pretty bad ass; muscular, fit, macho - he told me he does not do as many races as he used to but puts Afton on the calendar each and every year, "this event, the community, it is saving a lot of us..." his voice cracked, his eyes glazed over - it clearly was not all he intended to say, mid-sentence he walked away - I felt a lump in my throat... From the outside looking in, it's *just* a footrace - but not for him and not for us. To this day I can't quite explain it but I know that I am honored to be a part it with all of you, working side by side to make it what it is. The runners gone, the last of the equipment loaded into the truck, our collective hands hoisted the championship trophy, we did it again.

As team members, should you ever have any comments; concerns, questions, suggestions, compliments or complaints please feel free to bring them to me, we want to keep this streak alive. I am already looking forward to being on the team again next year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'JOHN STORKAMP'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'S' and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

John Storkamp | Race Director